Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A <u>computer-implemented</u> method for <u>facilitating real time communications for Internet users having a shared interest</u> ~~creating user groups in a network environment~~ comprising the steps of:

monitoring a plurality of currently active user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;

identifying at least one real-time affinity among the currently active user sessions based on session data associated with the currently active user sessions, an affinity being defined as a ~~similarity between~~ <u>a shared interest among users of</u> two or more user sessions;

responsive to said affinity identification, forming a user group for users of user sessions having an identified affinity; and

facilitating the users of the user group to engage in <u>real time</u> communication.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the facilitating step includes establishing a communication pathway among the user sessions of the user group.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said facilitating step further comprises the step of providing access to an interaction application for at least two of said plurality of user sessions responsive to said identified affinity.

4.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein said facilitating step further comprises the step of establishing a communication pathway to facilitate real time communications between users associated with said at least two user sessions.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said step of establishing a communication pathway further comprises the step of opening at least one of a chat session, an instant messaging session, a newsgroup, and a shared application.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session cookies associated with said user sessions.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session objects associated with said user sessions.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said session objects comprise at least one datum selected from the group consisting of a URL which has been accessed, an amount of time on-line, an item in a shopping cart, and a user identifier.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein said user identifier comprises at least one of a postal code, an area code, a city, a county, a state, a province, a country and a continent.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the facilitating step includes presenting a user interface in the user sessions of the user group.

11-22. (Cancelled).

23.　(New)　A machine-readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having a plurality of code sections, said code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

monitoring a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;

identifying at least one real-time affinity among the user sessions based on session data associated with currently active user sessions, an affinity being defined as a shared interest among users of two or more user sessions;

responsive to said affinity identification, forming a user group for users of user sessions having an identified affinity; and

facilitating the users of the user group to engage in real time communication.

24.　(New)　The machine-readable storage of claim 23, wherein the facilitating step includes establishing a communication pathway among the user sessions of the user group.

25.　(New)　The machine-readable storage of claim 23, wherein said facilitating step further comprises the step of providing access to an interaction application for at least two of said plurality of user sessions responsive to said identified affinity.

26.　(New)　The machine-readable storage of claim 25, wherein said facilitating step further comprises the step of establishing a communication pathway to facilitate real time communications between users associated with said at least two user sessions.

27.　(New)　The machine-readable storage of claim 26, wherein said step of establishing a communication pathway further comprises the step of opening at least one of a chat session, an instant messaging session, a newsgroup, and a shared application.

28.   (New) The machine-readable storage of claim 23, wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session cookies associated with said user sessions.

29.   (New) The machine-readable storage of claim 23, wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session objects associated with said user sessions.

30.   (New) The machine-readable storage of claim 29, wherein said session objects comprise at least one datum selected from the group consisting of a URL which has been accessed, an amount of time on-line, an item in a shopping cart, and a user identifier.

31.   (New) The machine-readable storage of claim 30, wherein said user identifier comprises at least one of a postal code, an area code, a city, a county, a state, a province, a country and a continent.

32.   (New) The machine-readable storage of Claim 23, wherein the facilitating step includes presenting a user interface in the user sessions of the user group.

33.   (New) A computer-implemented system for facilitating real time communications for Internet users having a shared interest comprising:
    means for monitoring a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;
    means for identifying at least one real-time affinity among the user sessions based on session data associated with currently active user sessions, an affinity being defined as a shared interest among users of two or more user sessions;
    means for, responsive to the affinity identification, forming a user group for users of user sessions having an identified affinity; and

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means for facilitating the users of the user group to engage in real time communication.

34.   (New) The computer system of Claim 33, wherein the means for facilitating the users of the user group to engage in real time communication includes means for presenting a user interface in the user sessions of the user group.